THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA

# A FUTURE FOR LEARNERS:

## THE PATH TO RENEWAL OF EDUCATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

November 25, 2004

To the Honourable,
Legislative Assembly of the
Province of British Columbia
Victoria, British Columbia

Honourable Members:

I have the honour to present herewith the First Report of the Select Standing Committee on Education for the Fifth-Session of the 37th Parliament.

*A Future for Learners: The Path to Renewal of Education in British Columbia* assesses the progress made to date on our 2002 report and reviews the benefits to students of enhanced tuition revenues.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

Richard Stewart

Richard Stewart, MLA
Chair

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# COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

## MEMBERS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Stewart, MLA | Chair | Coquitlam-Maillardville |
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| Dave S. Hayer, MLA | (Member since Oct. 25, 2004) | Surrey-Tynehead |
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## CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Kate Ryan-Lloyd, Clerk Assistant and Committee Clerk

## COMMITTEE RESEARCHER

Jonathan Fershau, A/Committee Research Analyst

# COMMITTEE PROCESS

On April 1, 2004, the Legislative Assembly empowered the Select Standing Committee on Education to examine, inquire into and make recommendations by consulting with the Minister of Education, the Minister of Advanced Education, and representatives of public post-secondary institutions on the following matters:

1. (a) to follow up on the 2002 recommendations of *A Future for Learners: A Vision for the Renewal of Education in British Columbia*; and, in particular;

   (b) based on the 2002 recommendation for a process for public post-secondary institutions to report back to the Select Standing Committee on Education on the enhanced tuition revenues to benefit students, the Committee is hereby empowered to request and receive reports on this matter from public post-secondary institutions.

2. Consider any other matters referred to the Committee by the Minister of Education and the Minister of Advanced Education.

3. Prepare a report no later than November 25, 2004 on the results of this review.

The Committee held an initial planning session in Victoria on May 12, 2004. On July 13, 2004, the Ministers of Education and Advanced Education appeared before the Committee to discuss their respective ministries' responses to the recommendation made in *A Future for Learners*. As the Committee's report focused on the need to develop an integrated plan for education in British Columbia, the ministries also prepared a joint written submission which highlighted the inter-ministry cooperation towards accomplishing the Committee's recommendations.

On November 10, 2004, the Committee invited presentations from the following three organizations involved in K-to-12 and post-secondary education:

- British Columbia College Presidents (Jim Reed, President; and Dr. Liz Ashton, President, Camosun College),
- British Columbia School Trustees Association (Dr. Lee Southern, Executive Director; and Penny Tees, President),
- University Presidents Council of British Columbia (Don Avison, President).

The Committee deliberated on its final report on November 17, November 22, and November 24, 2004

Minutes and transcript of committee proceedings, as well as previous committee reports, are available at http://www.leg.bc.ca/cmt. The Committee would like to acknowledge the cooperation of all the witnesses who provided progress updates on the state of education in British Columbia.

# BACKGROUND – 2002 REPORT SUMMARY

In 2002, the Select Standing Committee on Education (the Committee) released a report entitled *A Future for Learners: A Vision for Renewal of Education in British Columbia*. The report — following more than 690 oral and written submissions received by the Committee — identified and summarized the five key themes of the submissions:

- The importance of education to the economic prospects and social welfare of both the individual learner and the society.
- Current priorities and challenges in both the K-to-12 and post-secondary education systems.
- The need for increased local involvement in education.
- Access, choice, and flexibility for all learners in British Columbia.
- Quality and accountability in education.

Based on these themes, the 2001-2002 Committee identified eight shortcomings that required attention in order to enable the system to better respond to the present and future needs of British Columbia.

1. The Committee identified the future prosperity of the province is dependent upon the education system's ability to produce a greater number of graduates able to assume careers in fields with predicted shortages.
2. The Committee observed that a 'one size fits all' education system does not meet the needs of both education institutions and local communities.
3. The Committee concluded that the current system did not sufficiently facilitate a seamless transition of a learner's acquired skills between institutions, thus leading to an inefficient and an often-redundant of programs and resources.
4. The Committee observed that access to the education system was restricted by several factors, including geographic barriers, inaccurate pricing of tuition, arbitrary admission standards, cultural/language barriers, and that poverty or low socio-economic status may severely limit a learner's access to educational programs at all levels.
5. The Committee noted that there existed a desire from parents and institutions for greater and more appropriate choice in program delivery and educational options for students.
6. Despite providing most students excellent educational opportunities, qualitative measures such as graduation rates, number of graduate degrees conferred, success of Aboriginal students, success of new Canadians and adult illiteracy rates indicate that British Columbia could not be considered a 'world-class' provider of education services.
7. The Committee indicated that greater attention to services for early childhood development are necessary, as to ensure that children entering kindergarten are ready to learn.

8. The Committee agreed with parents that greater consultation between parents and educators is necessary to ensure appropriate levels of intellectual, social and career development.

To assist in their deliberations, committee members identified the following vision statement for British Columbia's education system:

> *The economic, social and democratic interests of learners, of local communities, and of the Province are best served by a seamless education system that enables all British Columbians to access a variety of world-class learning opportunities.*

Based on this vision statement, the Committee made 27 recommendations for system improvement based on three key themes. The recommendations focused on the following areas: mandates of the K-to-12 and post-secondary education systems, governance and management, and service delivery.

### Committee Inquiry

On April 1, 2004, the Committee was tasked to follow up on the 2002 recommendations of *A Future for Learners: A Vision for the Renewal of Education in British Columbia*. At their first meeting on May 12, 2004, the Committee decided that it was imperative to hear from both the government and the British Columbia School Trustees Association on the progress made to date in implementing the Committee's recommendations.

## Government Comments on the 2002 Report

On July 10, 2004, the Ministers of Education and Advanced Education appeared before the Committee to provide a progress report on the Committee's recommendations. The Ministers also submitted to the Committee written briefs that provided specific details on each one of the Committee's recommendations and documented the enhanced tuition revenues collected by each post-secondary institution in B.C.. The written responses provided by the ministries immediately follow each of the Committee's recommendations.

### *Education Mandates*

In 2002, the Committee observed that there appeared to be tension between requests to expand public education services to secure progress, equity, and opportunity for all individuals, and the need for cost-effectiveness and accountability. These tensions were particularly evident in the post-secondary system, where an apparent lack of coordination between colleges, universities, agencies, institutes and commissions — derivative of separate acts and mandates — and had produced barriers to efficiency.

To this extent, the Committee made five recommendations:

**Recommendation No. 1**

**Create a mandate statement for the entire education system that:**

**a) is modeled after the current mandate for the K-to-12 system;**

**b) acknowledges the importance of all citizens being able to access both broad-**

**based and career-specific learning opportunities throughout their lives;**

**c) describes the responsibility of each level of authority for three goals of education:**

- **i) intellectual development,**
- **ii) human/social development, and**
- **iii) career development;**

**d) defines the function and priority for each level of the system, and indicates for each level the relative importance of:**

- **i) readiness,**
- **ii) foundation skills,**
- **iii) employability,**
- **iv) research and development, and**
- **v) life-long learning**

**e) outlines expectations regarding:**

- **i) equity and accessibility,**
- **ii) flexibility and choice,**
- **iii) quality and relevance, and**
- **iv) accountability, and**

**f) promotes seamlessness between:**

- **i) early childhood education,**
- **ii) foundation education,**
- **iii) advanced education,**
- **iv) continuing education, and**
- **v) research and development.**

*Government Comments*

In order to create a cohesive and seamless mandate for the entire education system, the Ministries of Education (MEd) and Advanced Education (AVED) have recommended developing a joint statement to reflect the importance of life-long learning. However, the Ministers believe that is important to maintain separate mission statements that reflect the unique characteristics of the two education systems. The respective mandate statements are currently contained in the ministries' annual service plans.

The Ministry of Education is revising its mandate statement to reflect the Committee's recommendation that its mandate reflects the importance of intellectual development, human/social development, career development, foundational skills, employability, life-long learning, equity and accessibility, flexibility and choice, quality and relevance and accountability. The Ministry of Advanced Education mission statement currently reads:

> *The Ministry of Advanced Education provides leadership and support for a top-notch advanced educational and training system that provides all British*

*Columbians with opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge they need to fully participate in the economic, social and cultural life of the province.*

In addition, the ministers indicated that their respective ministries have developed an integrated staffing approach to meet the challenges associated with improving literacy, physical activity, and implementation of plans to address potential labour shortages. With respect to recommendation 1 (f), the ministries indicated that joint executive meetings are periodically held to share information on common issues and strategies to promote a seamless transition between the K –to-12 and post-secondary education systems.

**Recommendation No. 2**

**Consider the merits and feasibility of extending the mandate of public education to include early childhood education.**

*Government Comments*

While the primary mandate for early childhood education is under the auspices of the Ministry of Children and Families, the Ministry of Education works actively with that ministry on issues such as early childhood development and data-sharing. In addition, the Ministry of Education works closely with early childhood education service providers at the local level to identify vulnerable children and maximize early childhood development opportunities.

The Ministry of Advanced Education role is focused on ensuring that post-secondary education opportunities are available for those students and professionals interested in pursuing a career in early childhood education.

**Recommendation No. 3**

**Ensure the primacy of the public interest by clearly indicating in legislation that:**

**a) the mandate statement must be reflected in all documents, reports and plans produced at any level of the education system;**

**b) statutory provisions supersede the provisions of collective agreements or other contractual arrangements;**

**c) institutions have the flexibility to:**

- **i) institute best practices,**
- **ii) organize and schedule learning opportunities, and**
- **iii) assign staff as required for the effective and efficient delivery of education services.**

**d) design, deliver and fund professional development in accordance with their plans for improvement.**

*Government Comments*

In accordance to Recommendation 3(a), both the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education have developed mandate statements that are widely referred to documents, reports and service plans.

In recent revisions to the *School Act*, the Ministry of Education has ensured that school boards have greater freedoms to organize and schedule learning opportunities and to allow parents to volunteer at their children's schools. In addition, the Minister of Education stated that the government has restored education as an essential service under the Labour Code, as proposed in Recommendation 3(b).

Institutional flexibility has been promoted in the K-to-12 system by encouraging school boards to adopt best practices, organizing and scheduling learning opportunities for staff and to design, deliver and fund professional development as outlined in districts' accountability contracts.

The *Public Education Flexibility and Choice Act* removed collective agreement restrictions on class sizes, distributed learning, hours of operation and instructional support for colleges, university-colleges and institutions. For the K-to-12 system, restrictions on class size are now found in the *School Act*.

All public post-secondary institutions now receive block funding that provides greater autonomy and flexibility in program planning and delivery, recognizing that the post-secondary institutions are in the best position to make decisions regarding the needs of students, staff, and communities.

**Recommendation No 4:**

**4. Set strategic direction for the Province to ensure that:**

**a) the education system addresses the anticipated employment needs of the Province.**

*Government Comments*

Predicting future employment trends is challenging; however, government is working with partners to obtain information and respond to emerging trends.

To meet anticipated employment needs, the Graduation Program 2004 includes employability skills in the graduation portfolio. Along with required coursework in core knowledge and skills, this will maximize graduates' employability.

Students need to be aware of emerging labour market trends and opportunities. Across many occupations, including the trades sector, an aging workforce means more opportunities, and technological advances means higher educational requirements. Many districts are offering more trades-related training. Through locally-developed courses, districts are working with communities and the private sector to develop 'skills requirements' that meet the employment needs of local communities.

AVED is meeting the government's commitments by increasing the number of nursing, social work/child protection and medical student spaces; doubling the number of computer science, electrical and computer engineering graduates; and increasing the number of trainees and

apprentices. AVED has announced an aerospace strategy designed to improve skills training, and, more recently, the establishment of an oil and gas education and training consortium. The government is also working to ensure there is an adequate supply of skilled labour for the 2010 Olympics in sectors such as construction, and hospitality and tourism.

The Ministries of Education and Advanced Education are working together to address ways in which the education system can better integrate apprenticeship and career training. Secondary school apprenticeships allow students to begin their apprenticeship programs in secondary school. Career Technical Centres permit students to earn dual credit towards high school graduation and post-secondary programs.

**4 b) residents of British Columbia, who have attained the prerequisite provincial competencies and standards, have access to advanced education.**

*Government Comments*

The government has announced a post-secondary Strategic Investment Plan to the year 2010. Access to education will be improved through expanding the public system by 25,000 new spaces. With the increase in supply of spaces, more applicants will be admitted which should lower the grade point averages students need for entrance to university-level programs.

**4 c) learners and parents are informed about the future employment opportunities in the Province.**

*Government Comments*

Planning 10 is a new course required for graduation that gives students the opportunity to learn about labour markets and staying current with labour trends. Planning 10 encourages students to explore a wide range of career and education choices, to think about their prospects for success in those careers, and to plan how to pursue their chosen career paths and post-secondary education. As part of the Planning 10 course, students learn about eight possible focus areas which allow students to consider a broad range of education choices and career options during the graduation program and in the future. Each focus area can lead to a number of post-secondary education or career opportunities.

AVED provides information about the labour market, information on career options to help students make career and personal choices, and career planning information including self-assessment, occupational information, labour market trends, education and training and work search. Products include *Work Futures, Start Now! Work Futures for Entry Level Jobs, High Opportunity Occupations*, and *What's Key in Labour Market Information For B.C.* They are available online, including at Achieve BC, and used by career counsellors.

**4 d) unreasonable barriers to learners with special challenges are removed;**

*Government Comments*

School boards have more flexibility in designing and delivering programs for students with special challenges. B.C.'s K-to-12 data system supports identification of groups of students who require extra help. Aboriginal communities are working with school boards to develop and implement aboriginal enhancement agreements to support aboriginal students. There is more flexibility and support with changes to the funding formula. For example, special needs

students taking distance education courses are now funded fully equivalent to a special needs student in the classroom.

AVED sets annual targets to ensure continued access for learners in need of adult basic education, English as a second language (ESL) and adult special education. Adult basic education is offered tuition-free to those learners who do not have a secondary graduation diploma. ESL courses help immigrants and refugees overcome language barriers to meet their employment, education and social participation goals. Adult special education programs assist students with disabilities to access post-secondary education. In 2004/05, the budget for AVED's Adult Literacy Cost-shared Program, which funds community-based literacy programming, was doubled to $1.4 million.

**4 e) technology is used to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of learning opportunities and support services;**

*Government Comments*

School districts are using technology to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of learning opportunities and support services. Examples around the province include the Wireless Writing project in Peace River North and the increasing use of the web casting to communicate with parents and the public, as is occurring in the Burnaby and Kamloops school districts.

In October 2003, in response to the Rural Achievement Task Force recommendations, MEd funded three districts (Alberni, Coast Mountains, and Prince George) to pilot e-learning in order to provide more opportunities and options for students and increase course availability in rural communities.

In 2002, MEd removed the cap limiting the number of students in electronic learning programs and allowed all boards to offer electronic learning programs. MEd also now funds these students at the same level as students in a regular classroom. As a result of these changes the number of students participating in online learning has more than tripled in the past three years.

A strategic plan for e-learning in B.C. was created with stakeholder groups to ensure that students expand their access to innovative e-learning. BCcampus was announced in 2002 to provide B.C. learners with a web-based access point to all online learning programs and services offered by B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions. Student spaces for online learning will expand from 260 in 2001/02 to 1,310 by 2006/07. BCcampus also provides for system-wide development of online courses and programs. It enables institutions to work together developing courses.

**4 f) specific institutions are designated to engage in research and development into issues of societal importance**

*Government Comments*

In September 2003, MEd provided start up funding for a new School Leadership Centre, at the University of British Columbia. The centre includes a focus on research and communication about research and $180,000 for a new school improvement program. Sixty schools will receive improvement awards as part of this program.

Government strongly supports research at public post-secondary institutions. The B.C. Knowledge Development Fund (BCKDF) supports research infrastructure, providing 40 percent of a project's cost, typically matching federal funding from the Canada Foundation for Innovation. BCKDF has generated a total investment of over $670 million in research infrastructure in B.C. The Leading Edge Endowment Fund will establish 20 leadership chairs and six regional innovation chairs. The provincial government is also promoting a Life Sciences strategy with the federal government. All B.C. universities have research mandates and some university colleges, colleges and institutes also engage in research activities. Examples of areas of research include biotechnology, forestry, marine biology, fuel cells and alternative energy sources. Post-secondary institutions with formal research mandates report on research activities annually which are reflected in AVED's service plan report.

In addition, government has established a program called Knowledge Links to facilitate links between government and the academic research community. Seminars, lectures and a web site profiling research activities are some of the initiatives that will be pursued.

**4 g) research in education is both conducted and assembled, and the findings of research are communicated widely throughout the system.**

*Government Comments*

Research in K-to-12 education, focused on improving student achievement, is conducted, assembled, communicated widely — and most critically — applied in a multitude of ways. Methods to share research are both formal and informal, ranging from presentations by expert educators to district in-service training to research available by email subscription. MEd strongly emphasizes continuing professional development and education leadership in K-to-12. The Ministry is working with educators at all levels in continuous professional and personal development focused on improving student achievement. The Ministry also has research agreements with post-secondary institutes.

MEd sponsored a BC Innovations Conference for K-to-12 educators in March 2004 to share applied research, best practices, and to learn from international leaders in educational research about emerging trends and developments.

The Early Success symposium in May 2004 showcased the latest research in teaching and learning related to reading, writing, and oral language.

MEd staff regularly presents their research findings at conferences and in academic papers. The Ministry's Information Department plays a critical role in disseminating information to schools and districts.

**Recommendation No. 5**

**Review, revise and consolidate the existing statutes governing public education.**

*Government Comments*

AVED's legislation governing public post-secondary institutions has been revised and institutions have been given more autonomy and flexibility as a result. For example, the process and the time required to create university college, college and institute board bylaws has been streamlined by eliminating government's role in reviewing and approving them.

Some statutes have been consolidated, for example, the *Institute of Technology Act* was repealed, eliminating unnecessary duplication with the *College and Institute Act.*

As well, to meet K-to-12 partners' needs:

- K-to-12 legislation is consolidated in the *Manual of School Law*, which is available on the Internet and in print.
- Legislative and policy updates are communicated to partners in various ways, including email and web updates.

***Governance and Management***

When a *Future for Learners* was released, it was apparent to the Committee that the scope and variety of educational services, coupled with complex collective agreements, had resulted in a significant increase in bureaucratic regulations. As there were almost 100 separate bodies responsible for the governance and management of education in British Columbia, each with their own collective agreements, the ability of the system to make public policy changes in order to improve access, choice, flexibility and quality was impeded. The Committee examined whether or not some functions currently performed by local governing bodies could be reduced or replaced through the use of technology and improved centralized service.

With respect to governance and management, the Committee made the following recommendations.

**Recommendation No. 6**

**Designate specific institutions as "provincial institutions" and authorize them to offer specialized advanced education opportunities and to be centres of research excellence.**

*Government Comments*

The government recently announced new for three institutions as part of the post-secondary Strategic Investment Plan. The University College of the Cariboo will be established as a special purpose teaching university with a mandate to ladder college programs to undergraduate degrees, and to maintain a focus on open and distance learning by assuming responsibility for the British Columbia Open University/Open College. A new University of British Columbia, Okanagan campus will be established to offer university programming and courses, and provide research services. A larger, more focused Okanagan College will expand university transfer, trades and other applied training options.

All universities have research mandates and some university colleges, colleges and institutes also engage in research activities. Post-secondary institutions that have a formal research mandate report on their research activities annually through AVED's service plan report.

**Recommendation No. 7**

**Enhance the performance by:**

**a) differentiating clearly between governance and management responsibilities; and**

**b) providing orientation and ongoing training to members of governing bodies and senior managers.**

*Government Comments*

The Ministry of Education has clearly delineated the governance and management responsibilities in the K-to-12 system within the existing legislation, service plans and districts' accountability contracts. MEd has the primary responsibility to set educational standards based on the outcomes students need to achieve, to monitor student performance and report results to the public, to support districts in improving student and school performance, to allocate funds for the education system and to oversee the governance of the system as a whole.

School boards have a primary management responsibility for student learning. To support effective management, school boards have been granted increased autonomy, flexibility, and management responsibilities under the *Public Education Flexibility and Choice Act* and the *School Amendment Act 2002.*

Governance authority and responsibilities for public post-secondary institutions are set out under legislation. Academic issues are dealt with by each institution's senate, academic council, or education council, while management and overall financial responsibility rests with each institution's board. AVED provides annual budget and accountability letters that reinforce these roles and responsibilities.

With respect to ongoing training to members of governing bodies and senior managers, MEd works with the British Columbia Principals and Vice Principals Association and the British Columbia School Superintendents Association to jointly fund instructional leadership academies. As well, the deputy minister of Education and other executive members meet three times a year with superintendents to discuss instructional leadership to support student achievement.

**Recommendation No. 8**

**Require all authorities and institutions to involve community members and parents or learners, as appropriate, in creating and monitoring their service plans and in formulating their annual performance reports.**

*Government Comments*

Parental involvement in K-to-12 education is now supported in legislation. School boards must now consult with school planning councils on resource and staff allocation, the district accountability contract and programs in schools. School planning councils create school growth plans and the majority of planning council members are parents or parents and a student along with the school principal and a teacher. District Parental Advisory Committees (DPACs) and Parental Advisory Committees also play a key role in providing feedback to schools and school boards. In 2002, DPACs were legislatively recognized and their role, composition and responsibilities defined.

Public post-secondary institutions serve their local communities by undertaking extensive local consultation in developing their strategic plans and programming choices. All public post-secondary institutions are required to submit annual service plans and reports to AVED. These publicly-available service plans describe the activities institutions will be undertaking and specifies performance targets.

Public post-secondary institution boards, senates and education councils include learner representatives. Board members are representative of the local community and board meetings are generally open to the public. Most institutions have also established aboriginal advisory councils that include aboriginal members from local communities. AVED has undertaken discussions with stakeholders as part of the process of developing new policies and programs.

**Recommendation No. 9**

**Require that service plans and annual performance reports are made available to interested persons and groups.**

*Government Comments*

All ministry service plans and annual service plan reports are available to interested persons and groups, either through the ministries' websites or by request. With respect to K-to-12 education, all school boards are now required to make their accountability contracts and school plans available to the public. Many districts now post their accountability contracts, including progress information, on their websites. Other school and district performance data are available through government websites, including school and district profiles with Foundational Skill Assessment results, satisfaction surveys and exam results.

All public post-secondary institutions are required to submit annual service plans and reports to AVED for public inspection. These service plans describe the activities institutions will be undertaking and targets they will achieve. In addition, the institutions annual budgets and accountabilities are available on AVED's web site.

**Recommendation No. 10**

**Permit education authorities and institutions to include in their service plans requests for time-specific waivers from provincial constraints they believe are impairing their performance.**

*Government Comments*

The Ministry of Education has no plans implement waivers from provincial legislation and regulation within the public education system.

**Recommendation No. 11**

**Continue to develop a system for funding education that:**

**a) is simple, equitable, predictable and transparent;**

**b) ensures that appropriate funding flows to the service providers selected by each learner;**

**c) minimizes the impact of economic circumstance on each learner's access and prospects for success;**

**d) considers the principle that, as learners proceed to higher certification, they should contribute an increasing share of the actual costs of advanced education and the anticipated value of the particular education to the learner; and**

**e) facilitates monitoring the effectiveness and prudence of resource utilization.**

The Ministry of Education states that the new K-to-12 funding allocation system is simple, transparent, and results in more predictable funding to school boards over a three-year time period. The new formula reduces the number of targeted funding categories and instead focuses on per-student funding. The new system does, however, take into consideration the impacts created by remoteness, climate, student needs, and other factors and maintains block funding for the some aboriginal programs and Community Link. MEd also funds full-day kindergarten programs for aboriginal children, some students who have special needs and for ESL students. School boards, however, have the capability to decide how to allocate resources to schools and to students with greater needs.

K-to-12 students can now more easily move between districts and funding follows the student, which encourages responsiveness from service providers — including more choice. MEd, working with education partners, is open to considering more flexible funding arrangements to support more choice for students

The K-to-12 accountability framework, through the district accountability contracts and the district review process, facilitates monitoring the effectiveness and prudence of resource allocation in support of student achievement.

The Ministry of Advanced Education has introduced block funding for all public-post secondary institutions. Block funding gives institutions the flexibility to manage their resources and provide programming that reflects local priorities. In addition, AVED provides three-year funding targets to public-post secondary institutions that are communicated through the budget and accountability letters. In addition, the government's post-secondary Strategic Investment Plan provides a six-year period that targets for new student spaces.

B.C. provides financial aid to post-secondary students — based on financial need — as one way to reduce potential barriers to education. The BC Student Assistance Program is a comprehensive program that includes the Canada Student Loans Program, Canada Study Grants for Students with Dependents, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation Bursaries, and BC Student Loans.

During the core review process, AVED identified that a better alignment between costs and benefits of post-secondary education was needed. In 2002, autonomy for setting tuition fees was returned to public post-secondary institutions. Also, since 2002, apprentices have shared the costs of their post-secondary training by paying tuition for their technical (classroom-based) training. The efficiency and effectiveness of these decisions is monitored by AVED through the public post-secondary accountability framework.

**Recommendation No. 12**

**Enhance accountability throughout the system by implementing:**

**12 a) a framework to ensure that authorities, institutions, and individuals at all levels, are accountable for performance, and are expected to continuously improve and adapt to changing needs and circumstances;**

*Government Comments*

In accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*, both ministries have developed accountability frameworks. The K-to-12 accountability framework focuses school boards and schools improving student achievement. The framework includes: school growth plans developed by school planning councils, district accountability contracts, the deputy minister's visits to districts, district reviews, and aboriginal enhancement agreements. The framework formalizes school boards' responsibility to continuously improve student achievement. The accountability contracts and school growth plans are adaptable to local district characteristics, changing needs and circumstances, while ensuring the provincial standards are maintained.

AVED has developed an accountability framework for public-post secondary education institutions that lays out expectations for all partners. The framework includes the Ministry's service plan and report, publicly-available budget and accountability letters sent from the Ministry to all institutions, and a requirement for all institutions to develop annual service plans and reports. The Industry Training Authority, which funds training for trades and occupations, has an accountability framework and service plan agreement with AVED that establishes targets and performance measures. The Industry Training Authority funds training delivered through public and private trainers.

**12 b) an information system which collects and reports outcomes data on growth in learner achievement, stakeholder satisfaction, and compliance with relevant legislative and policy frameworks, as well as information on emerging trends and needs;**

*Government Comments*

MEd uses a data collection and reporting system that provides information to develop school growth plans, district accountability contracts, inform district review teams and other initiatives to support student achievement.

Students' performance can be tracked individually and by demographics, at the school, district, and provincial levels. Information available includes Foundational Skills Assessment scores in grades 4 and 7, transition rates, graduation rates, school and district profiles. MEd also provides provincial exam results at the school, district and provincial levels in grades 10, 11, 12. Teachers extensively use classroom data, including report cards and performance standards. In addition, MEd, in conjunction with school districts, conducts parent, staff and student satisfaction surveys.

A data warehouse has been developed by the Ministry of Advanced Education and colleges, university colleges and institutes to collect data on system performance measures. It collects data on a wide range of topics and is the basis for many of the performance measures in the Ministry's service plan. The University Presidents' Council of British Columbia provides similar data collection service for B.C.'s universities. In addition, AVED undertakes surveys that report on learner satisfaction and achievement.

**12 c) a periodic, comprehensive system for external auditing learner achievement, stakeholder satisfaction, compliance, and development in all publicly-funded institutions; and**

*Government Comments*

The Ministry of Education conducts up to 20 district reviews using an external team of educators, parents, and Ministry staff. The focus of the district review is to: examine district and school plans; meet with district staff and school planning councils; review the district's student achievement results using provincial, district, and classroom data; share the district's best practices on a provincial basis; and provide recommendations for improving achievement in the district.

**12 d) procedures for progressively greater external intervention into the governance and management of authorities and institutions who consistently demonstrate less than adequate performance.**

*Government Comments*

In K-to-12 education, several procedures for greater intervention exist. These include: the initial district review process; requiring districts to provide detailed responses to the district review team recommendations; the appointment of special advisor, to review and report on board matters; and the appointment of an official trustee to conduct the affairs of the school board where there is a significant risk to student achievement.

The existing legislation permits the AVED to request information from post-secondary institutions, and in the case of colleges, university colleges and institutes, to issue directives to replace government appointed board members and to appoint a public administrator.

**Recommendation No. 13**

**Identify a fair process that will establish the terms of employment for all staff employed in the education system without disruption of learning opportunities.**

*Government Comments*

The provincial government has appointed Don Wright to review the process for teacher bargaining in K-to-12 and to make recommendations for improvement. His report is expected in the fall of 2004.

Each public post-secondary institution is responsible for establishing the terms and conditions of employment for its staff.

**Recommendation No. 14**

**Institute an appeals process that will expeditiously settle any student or parental concerns not resolved by administrators and governance bodies at the institutional level.**

*Government Comments*

School districts are governed by elected boards of trustees who must be responsive and accountable to both the public who elects them, and the required provincial standards.

All school districts and post-secondary institutions must comply with the principles of administrative justice or be subject to judicial review. Under Section 11 of the *School Act*, parents of students enrolled in public schools may appeal a decision — or failure to make a

decision — of an employee of a school board, in matters that affect education, health and safety of a student. Section 11 of the *School Act* also requires school boards to have appeal procedures in place. Parents may also seek redress from the courts or the provincial ombudsman.

Other checks and balances in the K-to-12 system include the Advocacy Project developed by the BC Confederation of Parental Advisory Councils to help parents and students be heard resolve problems in a constructive way. In addition, recent changes to the *Teaching Profession Act* permits the BC College of Teachers to receive written complaints by the public about the conduct of a member.

### Recommendation No. 15

**Consider the most effective and efficient provision of administrative functions such as accounting, payroll, human resources, facilities maintenance, capital construction, and transportation.**

*Government Comments*

The *School Amendment Act 2002* allows school boards to enter into agreements to purchase or provide managerial, administrative or other services. Boards are able to contract with another corporate entity to provide shared administrative services.

In the K-to-12 system, the BC Public Schools Employers' Association (BCPSEA) is a full-service employers' association and the accredited bargaining agent for school boards. BCPSEA's responsibilities include: providing labour relations advice and services, including contract interpretation and grievance/arbitration case management; promoting effective human resources practices and coordinating compensation and benefits for excluded staff.

District functions, such as accounting, payroll and human resources funding practices have been changed to be more efficient and effective through the use of per pupil funding. Transportation costs — which were previously funded at historical cost level — provided little incentive for efficiencies. Transportation funding is currently under review.

By MEd policy, school boards can now keep a minimum of 25 percent of proceeds from the disposal of surplus assets. Previously, there were few incentives to dispose of surplus assets.

Capital requests are prioritized on the basis of capacity utilization considerations. Renovation requests are ranked by using the facility audit program. Facilities maintenance is now funded more on a per student basis rather than on square footage.

***Service Delivery***

When preparing *A Future for Learners*, the Committee observed that the education systems tended to be focused on the means of education without sufficient attention to learning outcomes. A reliance on bureaucratic controls resulting from collective agreements created inflexibility and unresponsiveness that interfered with professionalism and best practices. As a consequence, the Committee observed that the education systems were often seen to be driven by the interests of the system or the service providers rather than by the interests of learners and the public.

In order to ensure that the education systems emphasized flexible delivery, high expectations for student outcomes, consistent standards for results, and promoted a culture of service-oriented professionalism at levels, the Committee made the following recommendations.

**Recommendation No. 16**

**Establish a standing committee of educators and non-educators to identify and continuously review the competencies and standards that must be met to qualify for each certificate, diploma or degree.**

*Government Comments*

A standing committee of educators and non-educators — the Education Advisory Council — constituted under section 171 of the *School Act*, provides advice to the minister on K-to-12 policy matters respecting education, including competencies and standards required to qualify for a British Columbia Certificate of Graduation (Dogwood Diploma) or a School Completion Certificate.

The criteria for earning a Dogwood Diploma are clearly articulated, and reviewed on an on-going basis. In 2002, the Ministry of Education undertook a thorough review of the graduation program. Through extensive consultations with parents, students, educators and the public, the competencies and standards for the graduation program 2004 were established. The graduation program was updated to reflect emerging labour market requirements.

The Council of the BC College of Teachers, composed of educators and non-educators, sets standards for public school teacher certificates and member competence. For independent schoolteachers, the Independent School Teacher Certification Committee implements provincial standards.

The Minister of Advanced Education has established a Minister's Advisory Council on Post-Secondary Education that will provide broad advice on post-secondary matters.

The Degree Quality Assessment Board has been established to review and make recommendations on applications for new degree programs submitted by post-secondary institutions (public, private and out-of-province) and use of the word "university" submitted by private and out-of-province public post-secondary institutions. The Board conducts quality assessment processes to ensure that proposed new degree programs meet consistent, rigorous criteria to ensure high quality degree programs. Board members include educators and non-educators.

The new industry training system is a competency-based model. The Industry Training Authority (ITA), working with industry, is responsible for ensuring that program standards for trades and occupations meet the needs of industry and the workplace. The ITA will be using employer and learner feedback surveys to improve program delivery.

### Recommendation No. 17

**Organize the provincial competencies and standards for certificates, diplomas and degrees so that learners are able to pursue a career path in stages, to accelerate, to transfer laterally, to receive partial credits, and where desirable, to obtain interim certification if a significant portion of the provincial competencies and standards has been attained.**

*Government Comments*

In K-to-12, the requirements for earning a Dogwood Diploma are the same across the province. As long as provincial standards are met, there is flexibility in how they are met. Students can obtain credit in various ways, such as: completing courses at a neighbourhood school; challenging a course; seeking equivalency for a course from outside B.C.; recognizing external credentials earned outside of the school system; dual credit for post-secondary courses, independent-directed study and/or electronic distance education.

Career Technical Centres and similar programs allow students to complete secondary school while simultaneously earning credit for post-secondary education. Students can also be awarded a school completion certificate, if they have successfully met standards set by school boards, instead of completing the Dogwood requirements.

The British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer facilitates articulation and transfer arrangements among B.C.'s post-secondary institutions. B.C.'s credit transfer system is considered one of the best in Canada. The Council encourages post-secondary institutions to develop policies that enhance transferability of post-secondary credit courses so that credit can be applied toward programs at other institutions. Credit transfer provides flexibility to students pursuing post-secondary education. Student satisfaction with credit transfer is a performance measure in AVED's annual service plan report.

The new industry-training model is a competency-based, modularized approach to industry apprenticeship training. It will develop new and flexible pathways to competency-based credentials, such as modular training, which offers trainees the choice of becoming certified in different components of a trade while retaining options to pursue longer-term training and broader credentials. Competency-based skills assessment will allow more flexible skill development and assessment, and provide options to get credit for existing skill sets and to ladder or bridge into new careers. The model retains the national Red Seal Certification program.

### Recommendation No. 18

**Permit individual institutions to award education certificates, diplomas and degrees in accordance with the provincial competencies and standards, but also designate a provincial agency to award certificates, diplomas and degrees to learners who demonstrate attainment of the provincial competencies and standards without regard for how, where, or when they have gained them.**

*Government Comments*

In K-to-12, the requirements for earning a Dogwood Diploma are the same across the province. As long as provincial standards are met, there is flexibility in how they are met. Students can obtain credit in various ways. Once requirements are met, the Ministry prepares and distributes a Dogwood Diploma to the school or district office for authorized signature and distribution to the student.

In addition, school boards or independent school authorities may issue school completion certificates. These are issued to students who are not working towards graduation but have met other standards, set by the board/authority, and have achieved their individual education goals.

As noted earlier, the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer facilitates articulation and transfer arrangements among BC's post-secondary institutions. The Council encourages post-secondary institutions to develop policies that enhance transferability of post-secondary credit courses so that credit can be applied toward programs at other institutions.

The International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES) evaluates the credentials of people who have studied in other provinces or countries and determines comparable levels in British Columbia and Canadian terms. ICES is managed by the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT).

The Credit Review Service is a unique national program designed to recognize learning and award academic credit for workplace-based training programs. The Credit Review Service is the first of its kind in Canada and is also managed by BCIT.

The new Industry Training Authority permits individuals to demonstrate their existing competencies. Placement exams allow individuals with some trades experience to start their apprenticeship at more advanced levels, while challenge exams allow individuals with extensive experience to receive their B.C. trade credentials.

**Recommendation No. 19**

**Thoroughly review the legislation and the structures pertaining to apprenticeship training, to ensure the system meets the needs of British Columbians.**

*Government Comments*

Government undertook a review of the industry training and apprenticeship system during 2003. After an evaluation, an adjustment to industry training was considered warranted. The *Industry Training Act* established a new industry-training model, and in January 2004, the Industry Training Authority (ITA) began operations. The ITA is governed by a nine-member industry board and has a mandate to increase the quality and quantity of industry training and apprenticeship in the province.

The new industry-training model is a competency-based, modularized approach to apprenticeship training. The new model will permit the development of new and flexible pathways to competency-based credentials, such as modular training, which offers trainees the choice of becoming certified in different components of a trade, and building on existing skills. The model retains the national Red Seal Certification program.

The ministries are working together to make apprenticeship and career training more seamless and improve the transition from school to work. Secondary school apprenticeship (SSA) allows students to begin their apprenticeship programs in high school. The Deputy Ministers of MEd and AVED recently met with industry representatives to encourage them to hire more Secondary school apprentices. This marks the beginning of a new government initiative to further increase the number of students participating in SSA. Career Technical Centres also permit students to earn dual credit towards high school graduation and post-secondary programs.

Industry training courses allow students to pursue apprenticeship training. Specialized career preparation and cooperative education programs have been developed by many districts to address a wide range of student interests and skills. These programs include career exploration courses and extended work experience courses.

MEd is working with school districts, industry and the ITA to help increase participation in SSA and other kinds of industry training for secondary students. MEd and the ITA have begun discussions about collaboratively reviewing all K-to-12 industry training in the next two years.

**Recommendation No. 20**

**Empower authorities and institutions to design and offer learning opportunities that will enable learners to meet the provincial competencies and standards.**

*Government Comments*

Within the K-to-12 system, school boards and independent school authorities can offer a range of courses so that students can meet provincial graduation standards. The graduation program 2004 provides students with choices to tailor their learning through elective courses. They may earn elective credits towards graduation by completing ministry-authorized courses, board/authority-authorized courses (locally-developed courses that meet Ministry standards), or courses from external sources (such as Woodlinks, Industrial First Aid and Microsoft Computer Certification). For required graduation courses, there are a number to choose from in language arts, social studies, science, math, applied skills, and/or fine arts courses.

Boards have the flexibility to offer tailored learning opportunities. For example, the new "Advancement via Individual Determination Program" (AVID) is a joint research program between the province and the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. Chilliwack School District was the first to offer AVID, and it will be expanded to 20 other B.C. schools this year. AVID helps students, who may not otherwise have the grades or study skills, to be accepted into college or university. AVID offers students advanced-level classes and a specific elective that focuses on writing, organization and study skills.

Public post-secondary institutions design and offer courses and programs that respond to the needs and priorities of their students and communities. Under recent changes, public colleges may now offer applied baccalaureate degrees, and university colleges, BCIT and the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design may offer applied masters degrees in addition to undergraduate degrees. All public post-secondary institutions offer a wide range of certificate and diploma programs.

Government has improved flexibility in the post-secondary system through expanding the role of private institutions and trainers. The Private Post-Secondary Education Commission has been replaced with an industry led Private Career Training Institutions Agency. The Degree Quality Assessment Board has been established to review and make recommendations on applications for new degree programs and use of the word "university" submitted by private post-secondary institutions to ensure that private institutions offer the same high quality degrees for which B.C.'s public institutions are known.

The Industry Training Authority (ITA), working with industry, is responsible for ensuring that program standards for trades and occupations meet the needs of industry and the workplace. The ITA will be using employer and learner feedback surveys to improve program delivery.

**Recommendation No. 21**

**Designate one department or agency to develop a provincial infrastructure for on-line learning, and ensure that all institutions have easy access to this infrastructure so that they can support learners who opt to use an on-line approach for all or part of their education.**

*Government Comments*

In K-to-12, the most developed infrastructure is PLNet, managed by MEd's information department. The province has committed to upgrading connectivity required for online delivery. Two major upgrade initiatives (PLN4 May 2004 and PLN5 March 2005) will ensure that all K-to-12 sites meet the minimum standard connectivity (500 kbps) required to support most online programs. PLNet also connects post-secondary institutions to the Internet.

The first province-wide application to run on PLNet will be the new electronic student information system. When in place, the system will allow additions such as electronic assessments and examinations.
To help school districts, schools and students use online courses, MEd provided seed funding and is supporting an online consortium, BCED Online. BCED Online is a voluntary umbrella organization. Its purpose is to build strong and mutually beneficial partnerships on e-learning, between school districts and their district administrators, teachers and their specialist organizations, independent schools, post-secondary institutions, government and the private sector.

BCcampus was announced in 2002 as a single resource for accessing all of B.C.'s public post-secondary online courses. The program allows institutions to partner in post-secondary online courses and programs, and allows students (both secondary and post-secondary) to access online courses from any of the partnering institutions. The ability to access courses from several institutions increases the choices for students and provides students with more options for credentialing pathways.

BCcampus also provides for collaborative, system-wide development of new online courses and programs.

**Recommendation No. 22**

**Once learners complete the core curriculum, they are entitled to choose from a series of substantive pathways leading to certificates, diplomas or degrees and to attend any institution offering pathways.**

*Government Comments*

School boards and independent school authorities must offer students access to required courses in order to meet graduation requirements. One of these requirements is the new Planning 10 course, which introduces students to a range of career and education/training options.

BC Open University/Open College (BCOU/OC) offers online courses and programs leading to adult secondary school completion, college certificates and diplomas, and university baccalaureate degrees. As part of the post-secondary Strategic Investment Plan, the University College of the Cariboo will become a special-purpose teaching university and will assume responsibility for BCOU/OC functions

The British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfers facilitates articulation and transfer arrangements among B.C.'s post-secondary institutions. The Council encourages post-secondary institutions to develop policies that enhance transferability of post-secondary credit courses so that credit can be applied toward programs at other institutions.

The new industry training model will permit the development of new and flexible pathways to competency-based credentials, such as modular training, which offers trainees the choice of becoming certified in different components of a trade while retaining options to pursue longer-term training and broader credentials. Competency-based skills assessment will allow more flexible skill development and assessment, and provide options to get credit for existing skills and to bridge into new careers.

**Recommendation No. 23**

**Establish a College of Educators responsible for certification, standards of practice, ethics, enforcement, and professional development.**

*Government Comments*

Recent changes have been made to the BC College of Teachers to provide more accountability and greater public representation while ensuring a teacher majority on the governing council.

The BC College of Teachers recently released draft "Standards for the Education, Competence and Professional Conduct of Educators in B.C." to meet legislated responsibilities.

**Recommendation No. 24**

**Ensure that the College of Educators serves the public interest by appointing sufficient community members to its governing body.**

*Government Comments*

To serve the public interest, changes to the *Teaching Profession Act* ensure public representation on the governing council of the BC College of Teachers. The council is composed of elected

educators (the majority), appointed educators and appointed non-educators. The Minister must also now consult with parents before making appointments to the council.

### Recommendation No. 25

**Consider that membership in the College of Educators be the only compulsory membership for professional educators employed at all levels of the system, including those in management positions.**

*Government Comments*

Although membership in the BC College of Teachers is voluntary, all public school teachers must be members of the BC College of Teachers as a requirement of their collective agreements. Many independent and band schools also require membership in the BC College of Teachers as a condition of employment.

### Recommendation No. 26

**Require authorities and institutions to assess their effectiveness and efficiency by gathering outcomes data about learner achievement, stakeholder satisfaction, and compliance with the relevant legislative and policy frameworks; and to recognize individuals and groups who foster outstanding levels of learner achievement and stakeholder satisfaction, or who contribute significantly to research about the use of best practice.**

*Government Comments*

MEd, school boards and schools collect extensive performance data about student achievement to gauge the effectiveness and efficiency of districts and schools in improving student achievement. Outcomes data is used to develop school growth plans and accountability contracts to improve student achievement. Data includes FSA in grades 4 and 7, transition rates, graduation rates, grade 10, 11 and 12 provincial exam rates, satisfaction survey information, school and district profiles.

Compliance with relevant legislative and policy frameworks is determined though the accountability framework, the funding formula and auditing.

MEd is developing an electronic student information system which will provide school planning councils, principals, school boards and educational leaders with the tools to capture student performance information, report on student results, and make appropriate decisions.

A data warehouse has been developed by AVED, and colleges, university colleges and institutes to collect data on system performance indicators. It collects data on a wide range of topics and is the basis for many of the performance measures in AVED's service plan. The University Presidents' Council of British Columbia collects similar data for BC's universities.

AVED undertakes surveys that report on learner satisfaction and achievement. Examples include the University Baccalaureate Graduate Surveys and the College and Institute Student Outcomes Surveys.

Recognition of outstanding B.C. educators and their contributions is important. To support this objective, in September 2003, the Premier announced $100,000 for a new fellowship award recognizing excellence in K-to-12 teaching. Most public post-secondary institutions also recognize teaching excellence through annual awards. These awards are typically based on nominations made by faculty and students.

**Recommendation No. 27**

**Require authorities, institutions and individuals throughout the system to:**

**27 a) prepare annual plans for improvement and development based on measures of performance results and consideration of research concerning best practices,**

*Government Comments*

The annual MEd service plan and service plan reports, the BC College of Teachers annual report, district accountability contracts and school growth plans are legislatively required. Consideration of best practices is strongly supported through the district review process and continuous professional development.

All public post-secondary institutions are now required to submit annual service plans and reports to AVED. These service plans describe the activities institutions will be undertaking and targets they will achieve.

The Industry Training Authority provides an annual service plan and report to the Minister of Advanced Education.

**27 b) direct funds and release time for staff to engage in professional development that addresses identified gaps in current performance or emerging needs.**

*Government Comments*

MEd provides funding to many of the educational partners for professional development. One non-instructional day per school year for teacher "in service" training is legislatively designated. School districts also use other non-instructional days for professional development.

The district review process examines how school districts provide funding and time for educators to address performance and/or emerging needs.

Within government established financial and accountability frameworks, each public post-secondary institution is an autonomous organization and is responsible for the administration and management of its own resources and personnel.

## British Columbia School Trustees Association Response to the 2002 Report

- Penny Tees, President, BC School Trustees Association
- Dr. Lee Southern, Executive Director, BC School Trustees Association

On November 10, 2004, representatives from the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCTSA) provided an overview of the current K-to-12 education system. The

BCTSA's brief highlighted key programs developed at the school district level to meet the Committee's recommendations.

The British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCTSA) is a voluntary organization of school boards designed to promote locally-elected governance within British Columbia's public schools.

The BCTSA's presentation highlighted five of the recommendations put forward by the Committee in its 2002 report. The presenters then highlighted three challenges for which it would like the Committee to address.

With respect to the Committee's second recommendation — *consider the merits and feasibility of extending the mandate of public education to include early childhood education* — BCTSA indicated that several school boards have begun working with community agencies to prepare children for school. These districts include Central Okanagan, Kootenay-Columbia, Powell River, Nanaimo-Ladysmith, Cowichan Valley, Alberni, and Boundary.

BCTSA indicated that much work has been done to *set a strategic direction for the Province that ensures the education system addresses the anticipated employment needs of the Province* (Recommendation 4 [a]). The Kootenay-Columbia's Transition to Trades project has been very successful and is a part of a larger transitions agreement with Selkirk College and all of the Kootenay boards. Victoria's career technical partnership, which involves the four South Island school districts and Camosun College, is described as being another successful venture.

On recommendation 4(e) — *technology is used to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of learning opportunities and support services* — the BCTSA indicated that variety of district-level programs have been implemented. These programs include the Stretching Students Learning On-Line program in Delta, which is designed for gifted students in the areas of writing and mathematics. Other programs such as the Wireless Writing Program in Peace River North; Campbell River's eBlend program, which uses technology to support parents who are wishing to home school but wanting to deliver programs that meet B.C.'s learning outcomes have also been successful.

The Kamloops-Thompson school district has established a video conferencing project aimed to enhance school district–led teacher professional development. They are also piloting a Geography 12 program through video conferencing to reach out to smaller secondary schools. The Okanagan-Skaha school district partnered with the Penticton municipality to design and build a shared common core computer infrastructure that links schools and the district with the public library, the chamber of commerce, the Penticton Indian band, the seniors centre, cultural and art societies, and employment agencies.

The witnesses also indicated that BCSTA is pleased with progress made to date on recommendation 8 — *require all authorities and institutions to involve community members and parents or learners, as appropriate, in creating and monitoring their service plans and in formulating their annual performance reports.* Over the last two years, the development of school planning councils and school growth plans has both increased focused attention on student achievement.

In addition, school boards are actively engaging with their communities. Many school boards have involved the broad community in the development of vision, mission and goals for their school district. These are reflected in accountability contracts and school board strategic plan.

On Recommendation 26 — *require authorities and institutions to assess their effectiveness and efficiency by gathering outcomes data about learner achievement, stakeholder satisfaction, and compliance with the relevant legislative and policy frameworks* — BCSTA is working with the Union of BC Municipalities to encourage partnerships and share innovative practices. In the Kootenays, districts share a regional coordinator for professional development. School boards are welcoming a common student information system that is being developed by the province, and a consortium of school districts has been formulated as a buying group for computer software. All of this work is enhanced by an effective working partnership between the Ministry of Education and school boards.

**Areas for Future Review**

In addition to providing the Committee an update on the work to date on the Committee's 2002 report, the BCSTA identified three opportunities for improvement. First, the BCTSA recommended that greater coordination between school boards, rural councils and community leaders is necessary in order to maximize the potential for schools as the hubs in rural communities.

A second suggestion made by the British Columbia School Trustees Association was for the provincial government to work with the federal government to develop leading-edge strategies to promote fluency in English for newcomers.

Finally, BCSTA recommended a thorough review of the province's education system from kindergarten entry through to post-secondary. Such an inquiry should include two main components, focusing the crucial linkages necessary to increase the efficiency of transition from students from kindergarten entry to post-secondary to life-long learning. Such an inquiry should focus on the structures necessary to ensure foundations for future educational needs are maximized; the challenges to expand school choice; that teacher education programs are sufficiently attuned to the needs of teaching and learning in the 21st century, and that the best and the brightest are attracted to the teaching profession.

In post-secondary education, an inquiry should examine what coordination is desirable amongst institutions is necessary to avoid duplication, and how to ensure the post-secondary system is accessible for all students graduating with a Dogwood certificate.

# ENHANCED TUITION REVENUES AND POST-SECONDARY INSTIUTIONS

The second component of the Committee's mandate was to hear from post-secondary institutions on how B.C.'s universities, university-colleges, colleges, and institutes have used the additional tuition revenues to benefit students. On November 10, 2004, the Committee heard from two organizations representing the administration of B.C.'s colleges and universities

## British Columbia College Presidents Response

- Jim Reed, President, BC College Presidents
- Dr. Liz Ashton, President, Camosun College

The British Columbia College Presidents (BCCP) is a consortium of 11 community colleges, two aboriginal institutes and the Justice Institute of British Columbia. B.C.'s colleges, university-colleges and institutes train more than 130,000 students per year in more than 280 programs.

The BCCP submission to the Committee provided information on the two components of the Committee's mandate. First, BCCP elaborated on how colleges and students have employed enhanced tuition revenues to benefit post-secondary students in British Columbia. Second, the BCCP reported to the Committee on how B.C. colleges and institutes have responded to the shortcomings in the post-secondary education system as identified by the Committee in *A Future for Learners.*

### Tuition

Noting that the previous combination of a tuition freeze and lack of increase in government funding had resulted in significant challenges on the provinces' colleges, the president of Camosun College described how B.C.'s colleges have used the additional revenues generated from tuition fees.

The witness stated that, on average, tuition fees have increased by 32 percent in B.C.'s urban colleges — generating an additional $14 million in new revenues for Camosun, Capilano, Douglas, Langara and Vancouver Colleges per year. Similarly, tuition fees have increased in the province's rural colleges by an average of 28 percent — providing $2 million in annual new revenue to the College of New Caledonia, the College of the Rockies, North Island College, Northwest College, Northern Lights College and Selkirk College.

Between 2002-03 and 2003-04 tuition fees at the province's two aboriginal institutes increased by an average of 31 percent — providing $121,000 in new revenue to the Institute of Indigenous Government and Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.

The additional $30 million provided through enhanced tuition revenues have been reinvested back into providing greater access and improving educational quality for B.C. students. The witness stated that expanding the learning environment and increasing student financial

support have improved access. Quality has been improved by the college's purchasing classroom, lab support, and equipment; providing better student services; and 'sustaining the learning environment.'

The witness stated that tuition is a "critical and complex issue for post-secondary institutions," but that colleges and institutions must retain the independence to set their own fees in order to best serve the needs of their local communities. While representing approximately 15 percent of total college revenue, tuition represents one of the few revenue streams in which colleges control. The witness suggested that a balance must be struck to ensure that colleges generate adequate revenues while not limiting access by pricing tuition beyond the reach of potential students. At present, the witness declared: "at this present time colleges are close to the ceiling on tuition fees."

The witness recommended that the government continue to make improvements to the student financial assistance program in order to ensure that all British Columbians could access the post-secondary education system. In particular, older workers, Aboriginal citizens, people with disabilities, those whose first language is not English or individuals attempting to get off income assistance are generally negatively affected by high tuition rates and may require additional aid in the form of grants.

### B.C.'s Colleges and *A Future for Learners*

The president of the British Columbia College Presidents also described how B.C. colleges were implementing the recommendations made by the Committee.

With respect to recommendation 4 — *ensuring that learners and parents are informed about the future employment opportunities in the Province* — the witness stated that community colleges will be a key part of the province's strategy to meet the dramatic labour shortages that will unfold over the next decades. This includes training students to fill approximately 350,000 of the estimated 700,000 job openings between 2001 and 2011 of tradespersons, paraprofessionals, mid-management, and commerce positions.

On recommendation 8 — *requiring all authorities and institutions to involve community members and parents or learners* — B.C.'s colleges work closely with the community and with industry to provide quick response to the changing needs in the community.

Finally, BCCP is working with the province's universities to ensure that students who start their post-secondary education at a community college have the ability to transfer to a university for their third and fourth years. The witness noted that at present, 15 percent of college students are unable to transfer to a university due to a shortage of upper-undergraduate spaces at B.C.'s universities in arts and sciences.

## University Presidents Council of British Columbia Response

- Don Avison, President

The University Presidents Council of British Columbia represent the interests of the University of British Columbia, the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George and Royal Roads University.

The presentation and brief of the witness centred on three themes in post-secondary education: expanding access, investing in research, and supporting graduate students.

### Expanding Access

With respect to expanding access, the witness highlighted four key system changes that will have a direct impact on BC universities. These changes include the creation of a University of British Columbia campus in Kelowna, which will effectively double university enrolment in the Okanagan while expanding research and development opportunities in the region. The University College of the Cariboo's transformation into a specialized university responsible for the Open University program will provide additional benefits to students in Kamloops and the province as whole. The expansion of SFU Surrey from 3,000 to 8,00 full time equivalent (FTEs) students will expand university access to students in the Fraser Valley. Finally, the plan to add an additional 25,000 FTEs throughout the province will enable all of B.C.'s post-secondary institutions to more closely align education supply and demand needs.

In order to meet the government's planned expansion of FTEs, the witness identified three areas to ensure a successful expansion of enrollment. First, it will be essential to maintain or enhance operating grants to universities in order to sustain a high-quality learning environment while relieving tuition. Second, it will be necessary to expand capital funding in order to ensure that all students have access to sufficient classroom, laboratory, and library facilities. Third, in order to ensure all qualified students are able to attend university, a sustainable and complementary replacement program for the BC Grant program is required to help those students most in need.

### Investing in Research

Expanding university research capacity provides many economic and societal benefits: an educated and skilled workforce; licensed technologies and innovative products; and spin-off companies that generate millions of dollars and thousands of jobs into B.C.'s economy. However, ongoing investments in B.C.'s research capacity are needed to ensure that the province attracts its share of research funding.

To this extent, the UPCBC recommends that the provincial government revitalize and fully support the BC Knowledge Development Fund and increase support for knowledge transfer and commercialization through fully supporting University Industry Liaison Offices.

### Supporting Graduate Students

Graduate programs play a vital role in creating vibrant research communities. Graduate students support both research and innovation and the future faculty requirements of B.C.'s universities.

UPCBC believes that it is necessary that an expansion of graduate student programs must coincide with the expansion of undergraduate capacity. In addition, to ensure that B.C. can compete effectively with other provinces for top students, UPCBC recommends that the province develop a scholarship program that at least matches the funds provided for recipients of the Canada Graduate Scholarships Program.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## An Update of the 2002 Report

In March 2002, the Select Standing Committee on Education released *A Future for Learners: A Vision for Renewal of Education in British Columbia*. The report — a comprehensive review of the education and advanced education systems in British Columbia — focused on the themes of education mandates, governance and management, and service delivery. The Committee made 27 recommendations to promote a seamless education system to improve life-long learning opportunities for all British Columbians.

This report represents the continuation of an ongoing process to create and sustain world-class learning opportunities in both the K-to-12 and post-secondary education system. To assist in our deliberations, we received briefs from the Ministers of Education and Advanced Education and the British Columbia School Trustees Association. We heard that many of the Committee's recommendations have been, or are well on the way to being implemented by government and by school districts.

The Committee is satisfied with the progress made to ensure that clear mandates for the education systems are being established; that programs to improve access, choice, flexibility, and quality have been put into action; and that an emphasis is being placed on promoting quality learning outcomes. In particular, it is the Committee's belief that the combination of an increase in local school board autonomy, a simplified funding formula and three-year funding envelopes, and a comprehensive accountability framework, provide an improved structure in which to deliver world-class learning opportunities. We believe that these changes have revitalized the delivery of education — placing the attention on learning outcomes rather than on bureaucratic procedures.

The Committee is pleased to hear about some of the success in K-to-12 education system: a record high of 79 percent of students completing high school; improvements in the completion rate of students with special needs; a steadily increasing completion rate amongst Aboriginal students; and high levels of achievement on provincial exams — including a record 5,090 high school graduates receiving scholarships.

The Committee also noted the development of *Ready, Set, Learn*, a program aimed at preparing three-year-olds for learning and development. The program — developed with the cooperation of the Ministries of Education and Children and Family Development and the Minister of State for Early Childhood Development — introduces early-childhood learners and their parents and guardians to the local school system and gives them a chance to begin their learning through reading and other activities. Committee members noted that the program appears to have been very well received by schools and families.

Similarly, changes incorporated by the Ministry of Advanced Education to expand education choice and develop and align educational programs to address future skilled labour shortages are both perceived as positive steps towards implementing the Committee's 2002 recommendations. The Committee is pleased that government has set a goal of 25,000 new student spaces province-wide by 2010. The creation of UBC Okanagan and Okanagan

College, the transformation of the University College of the Cariboo into a special purpose teaching university, and increased allocation of student spaces at the province's other post-secondary institutions will ensure that all qualified students who wish to obtain a post-secondary education will have the opportunity to do so. In addition, the targeted increases in programs such as skilled trades, aerospace, oil and gas, hospitality and tourism, computer science/engineering, and health programs will ensure that both students and the provincial economy will benefit well into the future.

Despite significant improvements made in the K-to-12 and post-secondary education systems, the Committee recognizes several areas in which further work is needed to ensure quality educational outcomes are obtainable for all learners. Based on our 2002 recommendations, the Committee has identified four areas in which the Ministry of Education and school boards should continue to explore: the expansion of community school programs; articulation of career options in the skilled trades; a central depository for best practices in K-to-12 education; and a continued emphasis on e-learning.

In 2002, the Committee recommended the *development of a system for funding education that facilitates monitoring the effectiveness and prudence of resource utilization* (Recommendation 11 [e]). Community school programs enable districts provide a wide variety of services such as breakfast and lunch programs, inner city school programs, after-school care, school-based support workers, community school programs and counseling for at-risk children and youth. These programs help make schools the centres in their local communities. We encourage the Ministry of Education to continue to work with school boards to ensure that appropriate levels of funding for community schools is maintained — particularly in districts with declining enrollments.

The Committee was encouraged by efforts to promote skilled trades as a viable and lucrative career in the K-to-12 system. In particular, we are pleased to see the development of the Planning 10 course that promotes a variety of career options to students. Furthermore, programs such as the *Transition to Trades* in the Kootenay-Columbia district and Victoria's *Career Technical Partnership* are success stories that should be emulated by other districts. We would like the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education and school boards to continue to articulate the diversity of educational and employment options to students. In particular, the Committee suggests that a greater emphasis be placed on developing and promoting skilled trades opportunities for young women in our education system, for whom such trades are not generally seen as traditional career options.

We heard from the British Columbia School Trustees Association of many of the programs being developed by school districts to improve student achievement, improve the efficiency of management practices, promote early childhood education, and promote a variety of educational and employment opportunities. The Committee would like to see a central provincial depository where ministry and district officials, teachers, parents, and students can share and learn about these best practices. Therefore, the Committee encourages the Ministry of Education to work with the BCTSA to develop an accessible website that will coordinate best learning and management practices in education from our province's school districts and beyond. This is in line with our 2002 recommendation 12 (b) — *enhance accountability throughout the system by implementing an information system which collects and reports outcomes*

*data on growth in learner achievement, stakeholder satisfaction, and compliance with relevant legislative and policy frameworks, as well as information on emerging trends and needs.*

With respect to our 2002 recommendation 4 (e) — *set a strategic direction for the Province to ensure that technology is used to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of learning opportunities and support services* — the Committee wishes to see a greater deployment of technology to rural school districts to promote e-learning. It is this Committee's belief that e-learning can be used to increase educational choice for students in both urban and rural areas, while promoting service efficiencies.

Based on our 2002 report, we have also identified an area for improvement within our advanced education system. As identified by the University Presidents Council of British Columbia, research and technology commercialization has not reached its full potential. The Committee acknowledges the investments made by the Ministry of Advanced Education in the *British Columbia Knowledge Development Fund* and *BC Leadership Research Chairs*, and recognizes that the province has seen exceptional performance in terms of patent development and commercialization of B.C.-led research. The Committee believes that it is important that the Ministry of Advanced Education support research activities at B.C.'s universities, and promote the commercialization of research where viable. This is in line with our 2002 recommendation 6 — *Designate specific institutions as "provincial institutions" and authorize them to offer specialized advanced education opportunities and to be centres of research excellence.*

Based on the submissions our deliberations, the Committee make the following recommendations concerning our follow-up to the 2002 report, *A Future for Learners: A Vision for Renewal of Education in British Columbia.*

**The Committee recommends that:**

1. **the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Advanced Education, and the British Columbia School Trustees Association continue to work towards the development of a seamless education system for all learners in British Columbia.**
2. **the Ministry of Advanced Education and post-secondary institutions continue to work towards providing spaces for all learners who have attained the prerequisite provincial competencies and standards and wish to attend a post-secondary institution.**
3. **the Ministry of Education continue to develop a governance and funding framework which encourages and respects the local autonomy of school districts to deliver programs that best suit the needs of students.**
4. **the Ministry of Advanced Education continue to work with universities to ensure that B.C. becomes a leader in research, development and technology commercialization.**

## Enhanced Tuition Revenues

The Committee was also tasked to hear from post-secondary institutions on how enhanced tuition revenues have been applied to benefit students seeking a post-secondary education. We received briefs from the Ministry of Advanced Education, the British Columbia College Presidents and the University Presidents Council of British Columbia to aid our discussions.

The Committee realizes that a delicate balance must be struck between the need for institutions to raise revenues to provide the first-class education opportunities demanded by students, and students' ability to pay for their education. This Committee recognizes that some students may have faced difficult economic and personal choices due to the escalation in tuition fees over the last three years. However, in 2001 we heard from university and college administrators alike that a shortage of post-secondary student spaces had left highly-qualified students of all backgrounds on the outside looking in. The Committee believes that all students who have attained the prerequisite provincial competencies and standards and want to attend a post-secondary education institution should have the opportunity to do so. This philosophy necessarily requires participation from the Ministry of Advanced Education, institutions, and students to share the costs associated with obtaining a post-secondary education. Our 2002 recommendation 11 (d) — *consider the principle that, as learners proceed to higher certification, they should contribute an increasing share of the actual costs of advanced education and the anticipated value of the particular education to the learner* — highlights this principle.

The Committee was pleased to learn how B.C.'s institutes, colleges, university-colleges, and universities were allocating additional tuition revenues. In 2003/04, additional tuition revenues provided these institutions $102.2 million to expand the learning environment; provide student financial support; purchase classroom, lab support, and equipment; and sustain the learning environment. The Committee noted that the institutions have the autonomy to allocate these additional revenues to areas they deem most appropriate. Some institutions have devoted considerable resources to increasing student spaces and creating additional student financial support. Other institutions have invested in new equipment and student services to enhance the quality of the students' education. This Committee agrees with idea that post-secondary institutions must have the autonomy set tuition fees according to local demand, and have the flexibility to invest these revenues in enhancing the learning environment as demanded by local community and provincial needs.

The Committee notes that annual average tuition fees in British Columbia for 2004/05 academic year are the sixth lowest in the country.[1] This Committee strongly believes that all students who have obtained the necessary prerequisites and wish to pursue their education should not be unreasonably hindered by potential economic hardships. We believe that an education is the best way to ensure employability and a steady income. To this extent, we strongly encourage the Ministry of Advanced Education to continue to ensure that appropriate funding mechanisms are in place to support learners facing financial hardships.

Based on the submissions and our deliberations, the Committee makes the following recommendations with respect to how enhanced tuition revenues have benefited students.

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[1] Statistics Canada, *University Tuition Fees, 2004/05*, The Daily: September 2, 2004. Available online at: http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/040902/d040902a.htm

The Committee recommends that:

5. **the Ministry of Advanced Education continue to support the autonomy granted to institutions to establish tuition levels.**

6. **the Ministry of Advanced Education and post-secondary institutions continue to enhance the assistance provided to students whose access to post-secondary education may otherwise be challenged for financial reasons.**